

Committee: Community & Housing Committee

Agenda Item

Date: 10 June 2010

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Title: **DISABLED ADAPTATIONS**

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Item for decision

Summary

1. This report details the development of the Council's new Disabled Adaptations Policy.

Recommendations

2. That members agree the adoption of the new Disabled Adaptation Policy as identified in Appendix I.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
 - Housing Act 1996, Parts VI and VII
 - Equality and Diversity Document 2009.
 - Occupational Health Referrals
 - Tenants Forum for consultation and feedback. Forum date 01/02/2010. (Feedback in letters and e-mail on file). Minimal feedback received.
 - Disability Forum Meeting
 - Councillors Committee Hearing
 - Benchmarking online from LA's. Barrow Borough Council, Adaptations for Council Properties Policy January 2008. Exeter City Council, Disabled Adaptations (no date available). Waverley Borough Council, Policy for Aids and Adaptations to Council Properties, June 2009.
 - Housing Act 1985
 - Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
 - Quarterly meetings with Occupational Therapists.

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Disability forum, tenants forum, social services
Community Safety	n/a
Equalities	The document has had a full equality impact assessment

Finance	Adaptation works are fully funded through the HRA
Health and Safety	n/a
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Legal team have checked the document
Sustainability	Will ensure that works to properties are not carried out unnecessarily
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	n/a

Situation

5. The provision of disabled adaptations is not a statutory requirement. Nor are they a requirement of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). Nonetheless the Council has a proven track record in providing adaptations for its tenants, delivered through the capital funded Housing Capital Programme.
6. It was noted by Committee in November that there was pressure on the HRA due to the increase in requests for disabled adaptation works to council owned properties. Requests for adaptations are funded "on demand" and are always carried out. Last year's combined estimated annual budget from the Major Repairs Allowance and the Housing Revenue Account for disabled facilities on Council owned properties was £212,000 against an estimated annual demand of £250,000 based upon current requirements.
7. It was also noted that there was significant expenditure on the cost of changing adapted properties back to general needs use. This was having a detrimental affect on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
8. It was agreed that this matter would be addressed.

Current Situation

9. At present the council has no policy in place regarding the adaptations of disabled properties for people with impairments. The council adapts properties on client consultation with Occupational Therapists who advise on the priority and kind of adaptations needed.
10. Demand for adaptations is very high and has been increasing yearly. The waiting lists are also increasing as the Council has a limited annual resource to carry out these works and this has been fully utilised before the end of the financial year for the last two years.

11. The census also shows that there is a growing number of aging people in the Uttlesford area which will add to demand in the future.
12. Currently tenants are unaware of the waiting times for such adaptations and how requests are prioritised due to need and budget demands.
13. At present when a property that has been adapted becomes available to re-let the adaptations are removed if they are not required by the new tenant. For example where a disabled shower room has been installed it may have to be taken out and replaced with a bath.
14. With no policy in place the Council's position regarding adaptations is open to debate and legal challenge on the process of applications and waiting lists etc.

Consultation

14. Consultation was carried out with the Tenant Forum, Disability Forum and other interested parties such as the Occupational Therapists at Social Services and comments were received via e-mail and discussion. The legal department were consulted and benchmarking of other authorities took place. The overall feedback received was that a policy needed to be in place so there is an understanding of procedures and requirements offered by the council to current and prospective tenants. There was no negative feedback.

Summary

15. The policy is aimed at people with impairments who may require assistance in the form of adaptations to carry out normal day to day activities in their own home. The policy:
 - ensures that we offer a clear understanding of the procedure for receiving adaptations to council properties.
 - determines who can apply for the adaptations and consultation with external services.
 - explains our position regarding adapted properties and changing back to general needs.
 - advises on waiting times.
 - advises on other housing options for example moving to a property which is already adapted where available or possibly downsizing and freeing up general needs properties.
 - puts in place that adapted properties will be used where necessary to house people with the needs to which the property has been adapted and where general needs tenants take on the tenancy the property will stay adapted

The policy has been Equality Impact Assessed to ensure that vulnerable groups can access services through the means necessary and will be reviewed 12 months after being put in place to ensure that all the needs and requirements of service users are being met.

Risk Analysis

16.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The council is unable to continue to fund the level of requests for adaptations	4	3	Ensure correct prioritisation for requests Make best use of existing adapted council stock
The council is challenged on the way that it deals with requests for adaptations	3	3	To have a clear policy in place

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.